

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9254
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CONFIDENTIAL PARIS 11839

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LA, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEW OF SITUATION IN LAOS

REF: VIENTIANE 3140

1. QUAI DIRECTOR FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS LABOULAYE TOLD DCM MAY 7 THAT THE FRENCH SHARED OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION IN LAOS FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE IN CAMBODIA AND SVN. LABOULAYE COMMENTED THAT THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN VIENTIANE, CARDI, BELIEVED THAT HIS RELATIONS WITH THE LPF WERE VERY GOOD AND HE THOUGHT IT BETTER NOT TO RISK DESTROYING THIS RELATIONSHIP BY SHOWING OPEN SUPPORT FOR THE VIENTIANE SIDE. THE FRENCH WISHED TO MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH BOTH SIDES. LABOULAYE SAID CARDI HAD ASKED THE QUAI FOR INSTRUCTIONS AND THEY WERE STILL PREPARING THEM.

2. LABOULAYE THOUGHT THAT THE EVOLUTION IN LAOS WOULD DEPEND A GREAT DEAL ON EVENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM. IF SVN REMAINS A SEPARATE COUNTRY WITH A GOVERNMENT IN WHICH THERE IS PARTICIPATION BY THE NONCOMMUNISTS, THEN THE CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT LAOS SOLUTION WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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EASIER. IF VIETNAM WERE UNIFIED OR A TOTALLY COMMUNIST

GOVERNMENT WERE ESTABLISHED IN SVN, THERE WOULD BE VERY BAD REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE CURRENT COALITION GOVERNMENT IN LAOS. LABOULAYE ADMITTED THAT THE FRENCH WERE QUITE IN THE DARK ABOUT THE ROLE WHICH THE PRC MIGHT PLAY IN LAOS.

3. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ASIA BOLLE EXPRESSED A SLIGHTLY MORE OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF THE SITUATION IN LAOS. HE BELIEVED THAT IT WAS NATURAL FOR THE RATHER VOLATILE LAO TO OVERREACT TO WHAT WAS A MAJOR CHANGE IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. BOLLE SAID THE GOF SAW NO INDICATION THAT THE DRV OR THE LPF INTENDED AT THIS TIME TO EXPLOIT THEIR GREATER MILITARY CAPABILITY IN LAOS. THE FLAVOR OF THE KING'S TRIP TO SAM NEUA APPEARS TO INDICATE THAT THE LPF DID NOT INTEND TO MOVE DRASTICALLY ON THE POLITICAL FRONT EITHER. BOLLE THOUGHT THAT THE MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN THE SALA PHOU KOUN AREA WERE AIMED AT VANG PAO AND THE MEO AND NOT NECESSARILY AT DISRUPTING THE LINES BETWEEN VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG. BOLLE DIFFERED SOMEWHAT FROM LABOULAYE IN CONSIDERING THAT THE DYNAMICS OF THE LAO SITUATION WERE NOT DEPENDENT ON EVENTS IN SVN, BUT CAME FROM THE PECULIAR ASPECTS OF LAO GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY. BOLLE THOUGHT IT CLEAR THAT THE PRC STRONGLY FAVOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT COALITION IN LAOS. WHILE HE ADMITTED THAT THE LPF MIGHT CHANGE ITS PROGRAM IN THE LIGHT OF COMMUNIST SUCCESSES ELSEWHERE IN INDOCHINA, BOLLE THOUGHT THAT NATIONALISTS WITHIN THE LPF, SUCH AS SOUTPHANAVONG, WOULD FEEL THEY HAD MORE TO LOSE THAN TO GAIN FROM TOO RAPID A LAO COMMUNIST VICTORY. ON BALANCE BOLLE THOUGHT IT MORE LIKELY THAT THE LPF AND DRV WOULD CONTINUE THEIR PAST POLICY OF MODERATION, WHICH SHOULD REASSURE THE VIENTIANE SIDE. WHILE THE LPF WOULD PLAY AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE, IT WOULD WISH TO DRAW ON POSITIVE ELEMENTS AMONG THE NONCOMMUNIST NATIONALISTS (PARTICULARLY THE YOUTH) RATHER THAN TO ALIENATE THEM.

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